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FLOOR DEBATE

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in my opinion, were either necessary, or even visionary. Good things to consider, probably good policy changes. But this aspect of the bill, to me, represents very bad policy, policy that's contrary to what this Legislature has done for the last 20 years, and policy which will again take us back to the old property tax problems that we had 20 years ago, and even ten years ago. When you're measuring property tax and how burdensome it is in the state, there's always one measurement that I look at and that I think tells the most. Back in the early 1980s, we were the worst state in the union, or the next-to-worst state in the union, in terms of reliance on property tax as an overall percentage of the taxes that we levied. And that was particularly bad because we are a farm state, and the property tax is particularly tough on the farm economy, on farmers. Since then, hard work, lots of changes, but we are now in the neighborhood of the fifteenth or sixteenth state from the bottom. In other words, we're moving up into the middle of the pack in terms of our reliance on property taxes. We're relying upon them less. Have...do they continue to go up? Yes. As valuations continue to go up, as the system continues to adjust, they continue to go up. But the question is, how much would they have gone up had we not done the things that we've done? They would have gone up a lot more. I think it's incumbent upon this Legislature to maintain the levy limits as best we can, and to continue to try to control property taxes as best we can. We have in fact made enormous process (sic). And let me tell you what I think the difference is between the 749 (sic--LB 759) approach that we're discussing right now, and the LB 540 approach that we will be discussing in somewhat oversimplified form. As I understand it, Senator Brashear's allows the levy limit to go to \$1.10, from \$1.00 to \$1.10. Under the Education Committee bill, the levy limit would go from \$1.00 to \$1.04, temporarily. The difference between the two approaches is that with 749 (sic--LB 759), you would be acting in the...to encourage the direction of a permanent, strategic change of direction. In other words, we would be kind of going in a circle. There are so many of these little circles, as I live this life, over the years, in the Legislature. And we would be starting another one here, by going back to more reliance upon the property tax as a permanent sort of change. With LB 540, which is coming up, there is a retreat. But I